Dear Jim, Bud/NYTimes 12/24/75

Bud and I did not engage in what you could call a structured discussion yesterday. I'd thought, perhaps without reason, that he had some specifics in mind when he set the meeting up. It was originally for him to take us to lunch. I suggested we'd have more time is we snacked in the conference room.

When you were with Hemsel I told him the indications seem to be that they are out to get him. He seems in more than the expressed agreement. His face got pretty glum. At that moment I felt he had said more that may be unwise than I've been able to pick up. However, I did not want to get into any kind of hassle and I felt that asking him when he did not see fit to volunteer anything about that the three reporters wanted to know might lead to this or at the least to his getting defensive and thus eliminating the possibility of anything constructive coming from the discussion.

We may find this is premature, that they are up to nothing like what I suspect. However, with their record and with the situation what it is and with the experiences I've had with Crewdson and with the others staying 100% away, even when they have been told to call on a story and with Mo's being taken off it except for the promise to be able to read them in advance, I thought and think it wise to take some kind of initial steps, to consider what we might be able to do. I told him a bit of the Times' history with me, going back to 1965 and for except if rare cases entirely consistent and suggested that this might provide the means of fighting back. I told him when I phoned him after the Crewdson conversation that combined with this history any such attack might well cross the malice line. I do think that for all its liabilities and all our problems we might want to be prepared to take such steps if the stories are of the kind I suspect they may be. I think we should be prepared to do the same thing with Ray's interest. And I again remind you of the importance, if and when you can find time, of speaking to both Hirchkop and Cohen. Speaking to Jisrchkop need not involve the potential conflict of which I am aware with Patchen. In fact, that the King family and associates have come out for an investigation and have made serious if I think unfounded charges ought to get past the first of his two objections when I approached him years ago, his friendship with King.

That a man of Bud's experience and sophistication would allow himself to be euchered into such a situation is, after all I've seen, astounding. His own feeling of guilt and impending disaster is reflected in his volunteering that he would not again speak to any reporter on this matter without one of us present. Neither of us asked this. Something exception has to cause it. I think you'd do well to try to explore it so that we can be better prepared. He clearly feels that something is coming and is worried. His more likely indiscretions include me. If this eventuates, it will make no difference in my willingness to try to do something or for it to center around what can be done with me and not with either of you. However, if he has done this, he'll have to assume the responsibility that goes with it. You and I are not in a position to.

Please take me seriously on the possibility he has something to say that he hasn't. And the need for learning as much as we can about it, if possible in advance. John was working on this story last night. This need not but can mean appearance at a time when those others might consult for another side will not be available, like Xmastime. Or Friday, Saturday, Sunday and if I remember correctly, Monday is a government holiday.

The Ray possibilities may be great. I have made repeated offers to be John's devil's advocate and to show him what I have and can. And believe me, the government knows it can now be in real trouble from the combination of what Fazelon might do about the perjury and Green might do in this case. In short, our need is to be prepared to make use against them of what they may do. Thus the unanswered letters I wrote Levi and Tyler. Bud's disposition will be to let it all happen and then try to pretend it means nothing. If he has been indiscrete, his natural tendencies will be exaggerated. It may also then be a time to approach him about other approaches for he has to know he and has have laid rotten eggs. Best,